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OUACHITA
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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita Opera Theatre to present “Speed Dating Tonight!” Nov. 16-19

By Sarah Davis

November 1, 2017

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University's Division of Music and Department of Theatre Arts will present Michael Ching's opera *Speed Dating Tonight!* Nov. 16-19. The shows will run Thursday, Nov. 16, through Saturday, Nov. 18, at 7:30 p.m. with a matinee performance on Sunday, Nov. 19, at 2:30 p.m. in Jones Performing Arts Center.

This contemporary comic opera explores how one finds love in the modern world. The story follows a group of strangers who gather at a small coffee house for a speed dating event. The audience will meet all sorts of quirky characters including an origami artist, a budding country singer, a cat lover and a woman who is certain she has been abducted by aliens.

“Some matches are doomed for hilarious failure, but some have a spark of romance,” said John Alec Briggs, Ouachita lecturer of music and co-director of the opera. “The audience will have a front row seat as all these stories unfold.”

Briggs and Arnold Rawls, the other opera co-director, worked closely with the composer, Ching, to craft a show unique to Ouachita. Rawls serves as associate professor of music and artist in residence at Ouachita.

“The opera storyline includes a series of 90-second ‘dates’ that can be put in whatever order desired,” Briggs said. “Because of this structure, all 38 performers have their moment in the spotlight.”

This production integrates familiar forms of music into a dramatic presentation, allowing the audience to enjoy a wide range of styles including music theatre, jazz and country. This show is an opportunity to explore the changing face of opera beyond its traditional interpretation.

“This opera is a bundle of individuals and their stories. You can experience a hint of what every character is thinking in the process,” said Jacob Hemsath, a senior musical theatre major from Wylie, Texas, and student assistant director/stage manager for *Speed Dating Tonight!* “The audience can expect a lot of laughs, some touching moments and just all-around fun.”

Katie Kumpuris, a sophomore worship arts major from Little Rock, Ark., serves as assistant state manager/crew manager. For a full list of cast members, visit www.obu.edu/news.

Tickets for *Speed Dating Tonight!* are \$12 each and can be purchased online at www.obu.edu/boxoffice or at the Ouachita Box Office weekdays from 1-5 p.m. Students may receive one free ticket upon presentation of their student ID. For more information, call the box office at (870) 245-5555 during business hours.